

3. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 1 wherein the second protocol comprises a network traffic protocol.

4. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 3 wherein the second protocol comprises an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) protocol.

5. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 3 wherein the second protocol comprises an internet protocol (IP).

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6. (Twice Amended) An interface card comprising:

- a backplane interface to transmit and receive data over a backplane using a predetermined format;
- a network interface to transmit and receive multiple channels of network traffic from external sources, the multiple channels of network traffic to include one or more channels of data according to a time division multiplexed (TDM) protocol and one or more channels of data according to a second protocol;
- conversion circuitry to convert the TDM data and the second protocol data to the predetermined format; and
- a time slot management circuit coupled between the backplane interface and the network interface, the time slot management circuit to route the channels of data over the backplane to one or more predetermined destinations.

8. (Unamended) The interface card of claim 6 wherein the second protocol comprises a network traffic protocol.

9. (Unamended) The interface card of claim 8 wherein the second protocol comprises an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) protocol.

10. (Unamended) The interface card of claim 8 wherein the second protocol comprises an internet protocol (IP).

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11. (Twice Amended) A method comprising:
receiving multiple channels of network traffic from external sources via a network interface of an interface card, wherein the multiple channels of network traffic to include one or more channels of data according to a time division multiplexed (TDM) protocol and one or more channels of data according to a second protocol;
converting the TDM data and the second protocol data to a predetermined format;
and
routing the channels of data in the predetermined format via a backplane connection to one or more predetermined destinations.

13. (Unamended) The method of claim 11 wherein the second protocol comprises a network traffic protocol.

14. (Unamended) The method of claim 13 wherein the second protocol comprises an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) protocol.

15. (Unamended) The method of claim 13 wherein the second protocol comprises an internet protocol (IP).

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16. (Amended) An apparatus comprising:
means for receiving multiple channels of network traffic from external sources via a network interface of an interface card, wherein the multiple channels of network traffic to include one or more channels of data according to a time division multiplexed (TDM) protocol and one or more channels of data according to a second protocol;
means for converting the TDM data and the second protocol data to a predetermined format; and
means for routing the channels of data in the predetermined format via a backplane connection to one or more predetermined destinations.

17. (Unamended) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the second protocol comprises a network traffic protocol.

18. (Unamended) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the second protocol comprises an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) protocol.

19. (Unamended) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the second protocol comprises an internet protocol (IP).

20. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 1 wherein one or more of the interface cards receives electrical signals to communicate the network traffic.

21. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 20 wherein one or more of the interface cards receives optical signals to communicate the network traffic.

22. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 21 wherein the optical signals comprise SONET-framed data.

23. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 20 wherein one or more of the predetermined interface cards transmits electrical signals.

24. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 23 wherein one or more of the predetermined interface cards transmits optical signals.

25. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 24 wherein the optical signals comprise SONET-framed data.

26. (Unamended) The interface card of claim 6 wherein the network interface receives one or more channels of network traffic as electrical signals.

27. (Unamended) The interface card of claim 6 wherein the network interface receives one or more channels of network traffic as optical signals.

28. (Unamended) The interface card of claim 27 wherein the optical signals comprise SONET-framed data.

29. (Unamended) The network switch of claim 1 wherein the interface cards convert the received data to an internal cell format for transmission over the backplane.

30. (Unamended) The interface card of claim 6 wherein the network interface circuit converts the received data to an internal cell format for transmission over the backplane.

31. (Unamended) The method of claim 11 further comprising converting the data according to a time division multiplexed (TDM) protocol and the data according to a second protocol to an internal cell format for transmission over the backplane.

32. (Unamended) The apparatus of claim 16 further comprising means for converting the data according to a time division multiplexed (TDM) protocol and the data according to a second protocol to an internal cell format for transmission over the backplane.